

5        We claim:

1.       A system for storing and opening encased articles, comprising:

         a container (12) configured to store at least one removable article encased within  
a protective seal (28);

         a seal cutting apparatus (40), in combination with said container (12), comprising:

10       a receiving channel (50) defined by a first edge (44) spaced apart from a  
substantially parallel second edge (48);

         a cutting member (60) including a cutting edge (62), said cutting member (60)  
positioned so said cutting edge (62) extends between said first edge (44) and said second  
edge (48);

15       wherein said receiving channel (50) is configured to slideably receive at least a  
portion of said seal (28) and said cutting edge (62) is configured to cooperatively cut said  
seal portion as it is inserted into and translated along said channel (50); and,

         wherein said cut seal portion facilitates access to said article.

20       2.       The system of claim 1, wherein said cutting apparatus (40) is fastened to said  
container (12).

         3.       The system of claim 2, wherein said first edge (44) defines a slideable abutment  
structure and said second edge (48) defines a backstop.

         4.       The system of claim 3, wherein said backstop (48) includes a seating  
compartment (64) which receives and seats said cutting member (60).

5           5.     The system of claim 4, wherein said cutting member (60) is stabilized and bound  
by a securing member (66).

6.     The system of claim 5, wherein said cutting edge (62) projects away from said  
backstop (48) and extends into a relief nick (46) integral to said slideable abutment structure.

7.     A method of providing and opening encased articles, comprising:  
10           providing a combination container and seal cutting apparatus;  
            inserting a plurality of articles into said container, wherein said articles are  
encased within individual protective seals;  
            distributing said container with articles and seal cutting apparatus to an end-user;  
            removing a first article from said container;  
15           inserting at least a portion of said first article's protective seal into said seal  
cutting apparatus;  
            operating said seal cutting apparatus to cut said portion of seal; and,  
            retrieving said article from said protective seal.

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